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ABSTRACT

This information brief discusses the need to prepare secondary students with disabilities for postsecondary education and to support them in post secondary settings. A case study is provided that illustrates the challenges students with disabilities face in college, along with a chart comparing minimum and quality accommodations for students with disabilities. Steps educators can take to provide a quality accommodation experience are listed and include: (1) encourage students with disabilities to develop self-determination and self-advocacy skills early on in their secondary school experience through participating in Individualized Education Program teams and training; (2) recognize that students with disabilities can achieve to high standards; (3) pay attention to the provision and transfer of technology that promote independence and skill development from secondary education to postsecondary education; (4) design and implement both secondary and postsecondary school supports that take into account the differences between secondary and postsecondary schools and support students while they make the transition from one to the other; and (5) look beyond meeting the letter of the law to ways of ensuring students with disabilities have a quality educational experience. A list of resources on postsecondary education and students with disabilities is provided. (CR)

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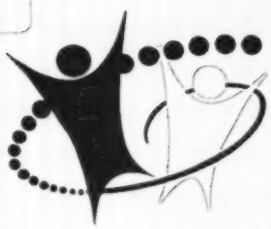
Information Brief
Addressing Trends and Developments in Secondary Education and Transition



National Center on Secondary Education and Transition

Creating Opportunities for Youth With Disabilities to Achieve Successful Futures

A partnership of —

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National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Alexandria, Virginia

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Providing a Quality Accommodated Experience in Preparation for and During Post-Secondary School

By Megan Jones

Introduction

The completion of a post-secondary degree has been linked to higher employment rates and higher income in the general population. At the same time, individuals with disabilities are less than half as likely to obtain a post-secondary degree and thus are less likely to be employed or to have a similar income as are individuals without disabilities. One reason for these differences is that the support that youth with disabilities receive in secondary and post-secondary school does not reach far enough toward ensuring that youth with disabilities have the same opportunity to enter, complete, and benefit from post-secondary education as do youth without disabilities.

Case Study: Alice

Alice is 18 years old and is in the middle of her first semester at University. She is legally blind. In high school, Alice was mainstreamed with support from a special resource teacher. The resource teacher provided her with all of her textbooks on tape. She also took all of her exams in the resource room. The teachers in Alice's classes always assigned her to a seat in the front of the classroom, and when she could not see the blackboard they allowed her to stand in front of the board and copy off information. There was also a specialist teacher for the blind who came to visit Alice once a week and taught her things like how to ride the bus from her home to her school. Often the teacher would accompany her to the lunchroom and help her find classmates to sit with. Once a year Alice's mother came in to school and met with the principal, the resource teacher, and the specialist teacher (her IEP team). Alice is very bright, so her IEP team decided she should apply to University.

During the first few weeks of classes at University, Alice meets with a counselor who asks her for documentation of her disability and has her fill out a form that asks for the kinds of accommodations she will need. After a frantic call to Mom to fax over a letter from her doctor stating she is legally blind, Alice writes on the form that she thinks she might need her textbooks on tape.

Alice is having a hard time keeping up in her classes. She missed the first two lectures in history because she couldn't find the classroom. She has all of her textbooks, but when she called the National Library Service for the Blind they only

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had one of them in stock and she figured that she couldn't ask the disabled services office for help because they had said that they needed the books two months in advance.

When Alice gets a "D" on three of her midterm exams, her mother convinces her to go back to the disabled student services office for help. Alice does so. After talking with a counselor and planning how to ask for accommodations, she feels much better, but the next day in her Algebra class she is too embarrassed to stand up in front of the class and ask about a notetaker and a reader. The next exam turns out to be a "pop quiz," and Alice asks the professor about getting the extra time the counselor had told her she was entitled to. The professor tells her that having double-time would give her an unfair advantage over the other students.

At the end of the semester, Alice has three "Ds" and one "C." She is also very lonely, and spends all of her time sitting alone in her dorm room. She is seriously thinking of leaving University and moving back in with her parents.

What is An "Accommodated" Versus A "Quality Accommodated" Educational Experience?

An "accommodated" educational experience focuses on meeting legal mandates such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These legal mandates represent *minimum* standards for accommodating individuals with disabilities in educational settings. A "quality accommodated" educational experience, on the other hand, focuses not only on meeting legal mandates, but also on using best practices to support the learning experience of all students, including those with disabilities. The table above gives several examples of an "accommodation" versus a "quality accommodation."

Challenges to Providing a Quality Accommodated Experience

The reality is that many youth with disabilities are not adequately prepared to meet the entrance requirements and academic rigor of post-secondary institutions. Nor are they, like Alice, necessarily prepared for their changing role in the provision of disability-related supports. At the post-secondary level, a focus on meeting minimum accommodation standards rather than upon the provision of quality supports presents additional barriers for students with disabilities.

Secondary School Challenges

- Many school administrators, teachers, staff, students, and community members do not believe that all students can achieve to high standards that will enable them to qualify for post-secondary school programs.
- Supports in secondary school do not adequately take into account the transition from secondary to post-secondary school environments.

A Comparison of Minimum and Quality Accommodations

Accommodation	Quality Accommodation
Secondary school student has been invited to participate in Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting.	Student is invited and encouraged to participate in IEP meeting and then does.
General academic standards are set for all secondary students in the state.	High standards for both academics and career preparation are set for all secondary students in the state.
The student's educational goals are set to achieve outcomes within the current environment.	The student's goals focus upon outcomes to be achieved in both the current and future environments.
Secondary school student (via parents) is regularly informed of student progress.	Self-determination skills are infused into the secondary education curricula and self-determination is actively encouraged in parent/school interactions.
A Statement of Needed Transition Services is included in the student's IEP.	The preparing environment (i.e. secondary school) is gradually molded to fit the receiving environment (i.e. post-secondary school).
The post-secondary education student must initiate support provision.	Students with disabilities and faculty members are given comprehensive information about, and encouraged to explore, various support options.
In post-secondary school, diverse teaching materials are faculty-specific and require the student to personally advocate for accommodations.	Post-secondary faculty increase their capacity to teach diverse learners, including students with disabilities.

- Many students with disabilities are not active participants in the planning of their education and supports. They may have a poor understanding of their own disability and their support needs related to that disability.

Post-secondary School

- In post-Secondary school, students with disabilities are expected to take a greater role in the identification of both their disabilities and the kinds of supports they will receive than they do in secondary school.
- Campus administrators and faculty have a poor understanding of how to modify their policies and teaching methods to accommodate students with disabilities in a meaningful way.
- Many post-secondary schools focus on equal access, ensuring their compliance with disability discrimination legislation, rather than on ensuring a quality experience for their students with disabilities.

Steps We Can Take to Provide A Quality Accommodated Experience

Students, Parents, Administrators, and Instructors can —

- Encourage students with disabilities to develop self-determination and self-advocacy skills early on in their secondary school experience, through such means as greater participation in their IEP teams and the integration of training in self-advocacy and self-determination skills into their curriculum.
- Recognize that students with disabilities can achieve high standards.
- Pay attention to the provision and transfer of technology that promotes independence and skill development from secondary education to post-secondary education.
- Design and implement both secondary and post-secondary school supports that take into account the differences between secondary and post-secondary school environments, and support students while they make the transition from one to the other.
- Look beyond meeting the letter of the law to ways of ensuring that students with disabilities have a quality educational experience. This can be accomplished through such means as forming a greater partnership with students, fostering collaboration between disability support offices and other resources within and outside of the post-secondary institution, and improving faculty awareness about disability and diverse teaching methods.

Resources

NCSET Post-School Outcomes Network
Center on Disability Studies
University of Hawai'i, Manoa
1776 University Avenue, UA 4-6
Honolulu, HI 96822
Tel: 808.956.5688; Fax: 808.956.7878
Email: ncset@hawaii.edu
http://www.rrtc.hawaii.edu

Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology (DO-IT)
University of Washington
Box 355670
Seattle, WA 98195-5670
doit@u.washington.edu
http://www.washington.edu/doit/
Voice/TTY: 206.685.DOIT (3648); Fax: 206.221.4171

Center On Self-Determination
Oregon Health & Science University
3608 SE Powell Blvd.
Portland, Oregon 97202
Tel: 503.232.9154; Fax: 503.232.6423

A Program of the Oregon Institute on Disability and Development and the Child Development and Rehabilitation Center (CDRC)
http://cdrc.ohsu.edu/selfdetermination/

The Ohio State University Partnership Grant Improving the Quality of Higher Education for Students with Disabilities
The Nisonger Center
257 McCampbell Hall
1581 Dodd Dr.
The Ohio State University Campus
Columbus, OH 43210
Tel: 614.292.9920; Fax: 614.292.3727
Margo Izzo, Co-Project Director (izzo.1@osu.edu)
http://www.osu.edu/grants/dpg/index.html

Optimizing the Learning Environment for Students with Disabilities — A Faculty/Staff Guide
Disability Support Services
Montgomery College
51 Mannakee Street
Rockville, MD 20850.
Tel: 301.279.5058; Fax: 301.279.5097;
TTY: 301.294.9672
http://www.mc.cc.md.us/Departments/dispsvc/tbl-cnts.htm

Further Reading

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